

Gray Brothers Block  
101 West Oklahoma Avenue  
Guthrie  
Logan County  
Oklahoma

HABS No. OK-12

HABS,  
OKLA,  
42-GUTH,  
1B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. OK-12

## GRAY BROTHERS BLOCK

Location: 101 W. Oklahoma Ave., SW corner of Oklahoma and Division, Guthrie, Logan County, Oklahoma.

Present Owner: C. J. Nelson, 1508 W. Noble Ave., Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Present Occupant: The Jelsma Abstract Company; McDowell's Paint Store.

Present Use: Commercial.

Statement of Significance: This structure is one of the finest remaining examples of stylish commercial buildings of the territorial period in Oklahoma. It was built for and occupied by important pioneer-entrepreneurs, and was an integral part of the commercial sector of Guthrie in both a business and a visual sense. The first tenant was the Bank of Indian Territory, among the earliest of the important territorial banks, no longer in existence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1890.
2. Architect: Unknown (possibly Joseph Foucart).
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a complete chain of title from 1890 to the present, to lots 1 and 2, block 57, Guthrie proper, the land on which the structure now stands. Reference is to the Clerk's Office, County of Logan, Oklahoma:

1890	Trustee deed October 24, 1890, recorded October 24, 1890, Book A page 1, Trustees for the Townsite of Guthrie to William H. Gray, et al
1906	Warranty deed August 10, 1906, recorded September 15, 1906, Book 31 page 266, George Gray and wife to William H. Gray.
1921	Warranty deed November 5, 1921, recorded December 19, 1921, Book 67 page 229, Lymon J. Gray and wife to Mary Gray (an undivided 1/3 interest)

- 1929      Warranty deed March 27, 1929, recorded March 30, 1929, Book 83 page 485, Mary Gray (a widow) and Edna R. Gray (a single woman) to Charles A. Fraser (received the northern 90' of the lots, containing the building)
- 1939      Sheriffs deed March 11, 1939, recorded March 16, 1939, Book 106 page 442, Sheriff of Logan County to Charles E. Fraser (Note: Resolution of action by Bernice Fraser Cambill against Charles E. Fraser for partition of jointly owned property, including the northern 90' of lots 1 & 2, block 57, Guthrie proper. Owing to the difficulty of dividing the above, action was adjudged in favor of Charles, cash consideration to be made by him to Bernice in lieu of partition.)
- Quit claim deed March 11, 1939, recorded March 16, 1939, Book 106 page 447, Bernice Fraser Cambill to Charles E. Fraser
- 1940      Warranty deed August 4, 1942, recorded July 24, 1940, Book 109 page 401, Charles E. Fraser and wife to Fred A. Holman
- 1942      Warranty deed August 4, 1942, recorded August 5, 1942, Book 113 page 492, Fred A. Holman and Lucille Holman, wife to C. J. Nelson and Minta Ann Nelson, his wife
- 1964      Warranty deed December 23, 1964, recorded June 9, 1965, Book 477 page 162, C. J. Nelson, a widower, to Arthur Benson Nelson and Curtis James Nelson
- 1972      Warranty deed March 29, 1972, recorded May 16, 1972, Book 611 page 128, Arthur B. Nelson and wife to Curtis James Nelson

4. Builders, suppliers:

- a. Builder: Unknown.
- b. Suppliers: Unknown.

5. Original plans and construction: There is no known record of the original design for the building. However, many of the early brick and stone blocks were described prior to or during construction in the Oklahoma Daily State Capital. The files of the newspaper are missing from 1890 to 1893 from the Newspaper Library of the Oklahoma Historical Society but there is hope that a description may be found in the files of one of the other leading dailies of the early Territory. It is known, however, that the Gray Brothers Block of 1890 consisted only of the eastern half of the present structure. The western portion was completed in 1893. The original structure at the corner of Division and Oklahoma was (according to Portrait and Biographical Record p. 212) 25 x 80 feet in plan, the completed building 50 x 140 feet in plan. The extra sixty feet of length was devoted to secondary spaces for storage and services, and is not immediately recognizable as contiguous with the major portion of the building, having no ornamentation which would make it consistent with that structure.
6. Alterations and additions: The second half of the building as described above may properly be called an addition, although it is by no means obvious from the external appearance of the structure that this is so. The two halves match stylistically, but for the fact that the rhythmic elements of the cornice are more widely spaced in the addition, and the new fenestration is narrower and more densely placed. There is a noticeable vertical gap in the brick work from the uppermost lintel to the tin cornice twenty feet from the west edge of the building, and a larger gap at the rear in the center of the south wall.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

1. William Henry Gray and George Gray. Natives of Manistee, Michigan, they came to Guthrie on the run of April 22, 1889, after running a grocery business in Udall, Kansas, which was established in 1882. They carried on a wholesale grocery and Queensware business, under the name of Gray Brothers, in a frame building on Oklahoma Avenue near Division, which they expanded to the corner (southwest) of the intersection in July of 1889 ("...the Gray Brothers are building a large addition to their store on Oklahoma Avenue to meet the demands of their increasing trade." Daily State Capital, July 21, 1889, p. 3, col. 1). They built the first half of the present Gray Brothers Block in 1890, completed it in '93, the year in which they dissolved the mercantile firm and went into real estate business.

2. The remaining associations are in the nature of tenants of the building. It seems to have established itself early as a center of finance and law. A perusal of the city directories yields the following results:

- 1894: Pickard, J. E., attorney, rms. 11 & 12  
Hainer, B. T., attorney  
Bank of Indian Territory, main business room  
Capital Barber shop, basement (there has always been,  
and still is, a barber in the basement)  
Ball, J. E., loans, rm. 14
- 1896 Hagan and Paine, loans, rms., 18, 19, 20  
to Bank of Indian Territory
- 1894: and similar list of lawyers
- 1905: Bank of Indian Territory  
C. B. Mitchell, attorney, rm. 6  
L. O. Lytle, attorney, rm. 19  
Jones & Lytle, attornies, rm. 3  
O. R. Fegan, attorney, rm. 7  
C. A. Blair, attorney, rm. 5  
E. F. Shinn, loans  
Peter Jelsma, real estate and loans

Pictured on a birds's eye view of Guthrie of 1891 is the building with the caption, "Robbins and Thomas Real Estate, rooms 1 & 2." The Bank of the Indian Territory was the most substantial and enduring of the tenants, having occupied the corner since its founding in 1889 and remaining through the Territorial period. The first tenant of the new building, its President and Vice President, U. C. Guss and Henry Asp respectively, were prominent and powerful businessmen and political figures. It had a capital of \$25,000 in 1902 (Souvenir, p. 11). It was replaced by the Oklahoma State Bank early in the 20th Century of which the Gray Bros. were directors (Review, p. 11).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

- a. There are several old photographs, primarily street scenes, taken in the 1890's by the local photographers Swearingen, Armantrout, and Prettyman. Prints of these are available for view and reproduction at both the Library of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, and the Western History Archives. Encaptioned "Election Day, June 4, 1889," the original frame Gray Bros. store is visible.

- b. Two bird's eye views of Guthrie, one dated 1890 in the collection of the Oklahoma Territorial Museum, Guthrie, and one encaptioned, "Guthrie, Oklahoma's Capital and largest city, age 2-1/2 years," in the collection of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, are embellished with identical engravings of the eastern portion of the building.
- c. Mr. Ivan Ridge, who runs the barber shop in the basement which was established by his father before 1910, owns an interior photograph of the shop from about that date.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

- 1. Deed records, Office of the Clerk of Logan County.
- 2. Guthrie City Directories:

- a. 1889
- b. 1894
- c. 1896-7
- d. 1905

3. Sanborn maps:

- a. "Insurance Maps of Guthrie, Oklahoma, Logan County, August 1894," Copyright 1894 by the Sanborn Map Co. (reproduction, in part).
- b. "Insurance Maps of Guthrie, Oklahoma, Logan County, September 1898," Copyright 1898 by the Sanborn Map Co. (reproduction, in part).
- c. "Insurance Maps of Guthrie, Oklahoma, Logan County, October 1903," Copyright 1903 by the Sanborn Map Co. (original, complete).
- d. "Insurance Maps of Guthrie, Oklahoma, Logan County, July 1908," Copyright 1908 by the Sanborn Map Co. (original, complete).

b. Secondary and published sources:

1. Portrait and Biographical Record of Oklahoma.  
"Commemorating the achievements of citizens who have contributed to the progress of Oklahoma and the development of its resources." Chicago: Chapman Publishing Co., 1901. p. 212.
2. Souvenir, 1902. Published by the State Capital Publishing Company. A souvenir pamphlet of the Saint Louis World's Fair, 1902. p. 11.
3. Review, The Capital City of Oklahoma: Promotional pamphlet. No publication data given; C. E. Weaner Series, Progressive Cities.

3. Likely sources not yet investigated:

- a. The records of Joseph Foucart, architect; not yet located.

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

This two story brick and sandstone structure has a tower demonstratively placed over its corner entrance. An elaborate cornice is interrupted quite regularly by small turret-like forms. All first story windows in the original portion of the building have sandstone arch surrounds. The second story windows are all double hung sashes with sandstone sills and lintels, above which are small decorated recessed brick panels. For additional information, see Town of Guthrie (OK-10).

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Oklahoma Historical Society, which provided funds. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1973 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Guthrie, Oklahoma, by Prof. John C. Haggard (Syracuse University), Project Supervisor; John D. Hnedak (Cornell University), Project Historian; William E. Barrett, Project Photographer; and student architects: Barry Gryb (Iowa State University), John Robbins (University of Virginia), Julian Smith (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Howard Takenaka (University of Oregon).